



ASMFC

FISHERIES *focus*

Volume 18, Issue 8
November/December 2009

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission • 1444 Eye Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C.

Working towards healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015

John I. Nelson Jr. Posthumously Receives Captain David H. Hart Award



The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission honored the contributions of the late John I. Nelson, Jr. to the conservation and management of Atlantic coastal fisheries by naming him the Captain David H. Hart Award recipient for 2009. John Nelson's wife, Sue, accepted the award at the Commission's 68th Annual Meeting in Newport, Rhode Island.

The Commission instituted the "Captain David H. Hart Award" in 1991 to recognize individuals who have made outstanding efforts to improve Atlantic coast marine fisheries. The award is named for one of the Commission's longest serving members, who was dedicated to the advancement and protection of marine fishery resources.

Mr. Nelson exemplified the ideals of the award throughout his career in fisheries management. For more than 20 years, he served as both an ASMFC Commissioner and a member of the New England Fishery Management Council (Council), making the protection of coastal and marine habitats a priority during his career. It was under his supervision that New Hampshire's Great Bay Estuary was designated as a National Estuarine Reserve site, protecting more than 3000 acres. Mr. Nelson's leadership aided the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department in the removal of dams to improve anadromous fish access to spawning grounds. As Council Habitat Committee Chair, Mr. Nelson spent many years guiding the development of the Council's Habitat Plans, addressing essential fish habitat as required under the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. He also worked diligently with both the Commission and the Council to maintain herring spawning closures and limit state fisheries for river herring and silversides.

Mr. Nelson worked closely with the Commission's Executive Director and other Commissioners to secure an increase in funding through the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, bringing the funds needed to begin the important NEAMAP survey as well as other programs. While working on the Executive Committee, he implemented programs to help guide new members of the Commission, ensuring a smooth transition as long-serving Commissioners retired. He also helped develop policies to improve the Commission's efficiency in its decision-making and public comment processes. Mr. Nelson devoted his career to the promotion of fisheries management and was highly dedicated to his work with the Commission. His wisdom, sound judgment, and exceptional ability to work constructively with others earned him the deep respect of his fellow Commissioners. His actions throughout his career exemplified the values and principles reflected in the Hart Award.

Inside This Issue

- Species Profile: American Lobster** Page 4
- Robert H. Boyles Elected ASMFC Chair** Page 6
- Atlantic Menhaden Addendum Extends Reduction Fishery Cap to 2013** Page 6
- Weakfish Addendum Responds to Depleted Stock Status** Page 7
- State Commercial Quota Transfers Approved for Black Sea Bass & Scup** Page 7
- Atlantic Striped Bass Assessment Update** Page 8
- Red Drum Benchmark Assessment Findings** Page 9
- Omnibus Amendment PID Released for Public Comment** Page 9
- Northern Shrimp 2010 Fishing Season Set at 180 Days** Page 10
- ASMFC Employee of the Quarter Named** Page 11

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and diadromous species. The fifteen member states of the Commission are: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Robert H. Boyles, Jr., (SC), Chair
Paul Diodati (MA), Vice-Chair

John V. O'Shea, Executive Director
Robert E. Beal, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program
Patrick A. Campfield, Science Director
Laura C. Leach, Director of Finance & Administration

Tina L. Berger, Editor
tberger@asmfc.org

(202)289-6400 Phone • (202)289-6051 Fax
www.asmfc.org

Upcoming Meetings

12/7 - 11:

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront Hotel, 2717 W. Fort Macon Road, Atlantic Beach, North Carolina; (800) 624-8875.

12/8 - 10:

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Suites, Wilmington, Delaware. (Note: the Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Board will be meeting jointly with the Council on 12/8 & 9 to set the recreational specifications for all 3 species, as well as review the development of the MAFMC Amendment to incorporate accountability measures and annual catch limits into the Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Plan)

South Atlantic Species Omnibus Amendment PID Hearings:

12/14 (6:30 PM):

Georgia Coastal Resources Division, Holton's Restaurant, Exit 76 - Interstate 95, 13711 Highway 84, Midway, Georgia. For more information, please contact Doug Haymans at (912) 264-7218.

12/14 (6:00 PM):

Virginia Marine Resources Commission, 2600 Washington Avenue, 4th Floor, Newport News, Virginia. For more information, please contact Jack Travelstead at (757) 247-2247.

12/15 (6:30 PM):

South Carolina Dept. of Natural Resources, 217 Fort Johnson Road, Charleston, South Carolina. For more information, please contact Mel Bell at (843) 953-9007.

12/16 (6:00 PM):

North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, 5285 US Highway 70 West (corner of US Highway 70W and Little Nine Road; old Security Solutions building), Morehead City, North Carolina. For more information, please contact Michelle Duval at (252) 808-8011.

12/15 (begins at 9 A.M.) -17 (ends at noon):

ASMFC Advanced Stock Assessment Training Workshop, NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center, 75 Virginia Beach Drive, Key Biscayne, Florida.

1/26 - 28:

New England Fishery Management Council, Sheraton Harborside, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

2/1 - 4:

ASMFC Winter Meeting, Crowne Plaza Old Town Alexandria, 901 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia; (800) 333-3333.

A Purposeful Career

In the past few years we have seen a “gray wave” of state directors complete their professional careers in fisheries after many years of service to their states and to our Commission. Last month one of the last members of this generation, Susan Shipman, Director of Coastal Resources retired. She left Georgia’s Department of Natural Resources after an extraordinary career of 31 years of dedicated service to the marine resources and citizens of Georgia.

She distinguished herself through her dedication to the proper management and development of marine fisheries, and the protection of marine habitats. She has been a visionary and committed member of our Commission family, serving on our Management and Science Committee for nine years and as Georgia’s Administrative Commissioner for 14 years, making a number of remarkable and enduring contributions.

Susan was the driving force of the small cadre of leaders who succeeded in transforming our Commission from an advisory body to an action body through the implementation of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. She was the lead author of our original ISFMP Charter, establishing the Commission standards and procedures used today to coordinate fisheries management. These standards and procedures have served us well, successfully withstanding a number of legal challenges.

She played a key role in the development of the Commission’s first Five-Year Strategic Plan. It included Commission values, driving forces, and broad policies, as well as specific strategic goals. Recognizing the need for Commission activities to be linked to our long term goals, she formalized the sound process of using our Strategic Plan to craft our annual action plans. As Commission Chair, Susan distinguished herself through her leadership of the Commission. When Jack Dunnigan resigned after 11 years as our Executive Director to join NOAA Fisheries, Susan led the effort to recruit a successor and to manage his transition into the Commission. She took great effort to become familiar with species not directly of interest

to Georgia, because she knew how contentious issues related to striped bass, lobster and summer flounder were to our states. As Chair, she took a deep and genuine interest in our staff, advocating that the Commission be an employer of choice within the D.C. area.

Susan’s enormous contributions were formally recognized by the Commission in 2000 when she was presented with David H. Hart Award, our highest honor. Nine years later at Susan’s retirement celebration, the point was made that Susan was a woman who excelled in a man’s world. She did this through extensive preparation; she came to meetings having read the briefing books, science reports, public comments, and Roberts

Rules of Order. She made it known to others that she would adhere to a clear set of personal values, including integrity, responsibility, accountability, transparency, and courage. She carried herself with graciousness and treated others with respect...always. She showed deep and genuine concern for people, including stakeholders, her community at-large, and especially her staff.

Both her words and her actions within the Commission process reflected her deep commitment to cooperation. And, all of this was done with a seemingly inexhaustible passion.

At her retirement, Susan noted with pride the balanced approach the Department has taken to conservation management. She expressed the belief that as a result of the efforts of the Coastal Resources Division, Georgia’s exceptional coast is the crown jewel of our nation’s coastlines. She reminded her subordinates and peers of their public trust responsibilities and cautioned them not to get sidetracked by the din of external critics who might criticize them to advance their own agendas. She assured them she would continue to be their biggest cheerleader as “Susie Q. Public.”

A purposeful career, marked by courage, integrity, and competence, directed towards doing good for others by leaving our natural resources in a better condition for the next generation to enjoy. Hopefully, that is a goal we can all respect and aspire to.





American Lobster
Homarus americanus

Interesting Facts:

* Lobsters smell food with small hairs covering their body and 4 small antennae.

* Lobsters' teeth are in their stomach.

* Lobsters molt in order to grow. In the 1st year, a lobster molts 10 times to reach a length of 1 - 1 ½".

* A 1 lb lobster carries ~8,000 eggs while a 9 lb female may carry more than 100,000 eggs.

Largest on Record: 44 lbs

Maximum Age: 60 years or more

Recommended Stock Status:

GOM - Not depleted/no overfishing

GBK - Not depleted/no overfishing

SNE - Depleted/no overfishing

Species Profile: American Lobster

Board Initiates Addendum to Consider New Biological Reference Points

Introduction

With an ex-vessel value of nearly \$318 million in 2008, American lobster ranks as one of the top commercial fisheries along the Atlantic coast. Over the last fifteen years, coastwide landings have increased substantially, rising from about 57 million pounds in 1993 to 85 million pounds in 2008. Despite these overall increases, landings in Long Island Sound and the waters off of Rhode Island and southern Massachusetts have been declining over the past several years.

These declines have been explained in part by the 2009 peer-reviewed stock assessment. The Southern New England (SNE) stock, which extends from Massachusetts to North Carolina, is in poor condition with continued low abundance and poor recruitment. Lobsters found in Massachusetts Bay and Stellwagen Bank (referred to as NMFS Statistical Area 514 in the assessment) showed further declines in recruitment and abundance since the last assessment. The Peer Review Panel noted particular concern regarding the status of the stock throughout the SNE assessment area and within Area 514, recommending further restrictions in both areas.

In November, the Board initiated development of Addendum XVI, which will present options for new biological reference points to gauge stock health and a mechanism to modify reference points and stock status determination criteria through Board action.

Life History

American lobster is a bottom-dwelling crustacean that is widely distributed over the continental shelf of North America. In the inshore waters of the U.S., it is most abundant from Maine through New Jersey, with abundance declining from north to south. Offshore, it occurs from Maine through North Carolina. Three stocks units have been identified based on regional differences in life history parameters. They are the Gulf of Maine (GOM), Georges Bank (GBK), and Southern New England (SNE).

Lobsters are solitary and territorial, living in a variety of habitats as long as there is a burrow or crevice in which they can take cover. They usually remain within a home range of about 5-10 square km. In offshore areas, large mature lobsters make seasonal migrations inshore to reproduce. In southern inshore areas, large lobsters may move to deeper, cooler waters seasonally or permanently.

Reproduction and growth are linked to the molting (shedding of their shell) cycle. Lobsters have hard, external skeletons (shell) that provide protection and body support. Lobsters periodically shed their shell to allow their body size to increase and mating to occur. Sperm is deposited in "soft" (recently molted) females and stored internally until extrusion, which can extend for two years. When extruded, the eggs are fertilized and attached to the underside of the female, where they are carried for 9 to 11 months before hatching. Females hatch their eggs from mid-May to mid-June. Lobster larvae transition through five stages. For the first four stages larvae are planktonic, swimming at or near the water surface. At the fifth larval stage, juveniles sink to the ocean floor where they remain for the rest of their lifetime. Lobsters reach



market size in about four to nine years, depending on water temperature and other biological factors.

Commercial & Recreational Fisheries

The lobster fishery has seen incredible expansion in effort and landings since the late 1940s and early 1950s, when landings varied around 25 million pounds. The last two decades alone have seen dramatic increases in lobster landings, rising from 57 million pounds in 1993 and peaking in 2006 at 93 million pounds. Landings decreased slightly in 2008 with preliminary harvest estimates of 85 million pounds. Approximately 90% of lobster are caught in inshore waters, with Maine and Massachusetts accounting for 77% and 13% of the commercial landings, respectively. Since 2003, 87-89% of the

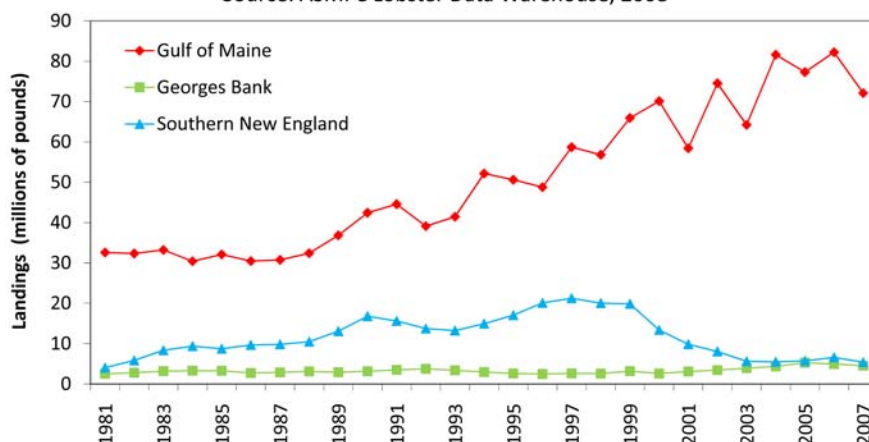
magnitude of recreational landings is unknown.

2009 Stock Assessment

The 2009 peer-reviewed stock assessment report indicates that the resource presents a mixed picture of stock abundance throughout its U.S. range. The report indicated record high stock abundance and recruitment (number of lobsters entering the fishery) throughout most of the GOM and GBK. The SNE stock, fared less well with continued low abundance and poor recruitment.

Despite current high levels of abundance and recruitment in GOM and GBK, the Panel recommended “that managers be particularly vigilant of recruitment patterns in these stocks and stand ready to impose substantial restric-

American Lobster Commercial Landings by Area Fished
Source: ASMFC Lobster Data Warehouse, 2008



coastwide landings have come from GOM. SNE has the second largest portion of the catch, accounting for 7-8% of the catch over the last five years. GBK has the smallest portion, representing 5-6% of the total landings. In 2007, landings by lobster conservation management area (LCMA) have declined in all areas but Outer Cape Cod and LCMA 4 (waters off the south shore of Long Island and northern New Jersey).

Lobster pots are the predominant commercial gear, with a small percent of the landings being caught by trawls. Lobster is also taken recreationally with pots and by hand while SCUBA diving. The

tions should recruitments decline.” The Panel cautioned that productivity has been much lower in the past. For example, landings in the GOM, which accounts for nearly 87% of the coastwide fishery since 2002, fluctuated without trend around 20 million pounds from 1930 – 1990, possibly due to low recruitment and production. Those levels are substantially lower than 72.8 million pounds, which has been the average annual landings from 2000 and 2007. The current levels of fishing effort and harvest will not be sustainable if the stock returns to lower recruitment and production levels. This is of particular concern to the Panel because fisher-

Lobster Assessment Q&A

How does this assessment differ from previous assessments? The 2009 stock assessment used a new length-based model developed by Dr. Yong Chen of the University of Maine. The assessment incorporated more fishery-independent survey data, including the Maine/New Hampshire coastal trawl survey.

How is the new model different than other models? Many stock assessments are age-based, but lobsters, like most invertebrates, do not have the ear bones and scales that record growth over the years. The new model is based on lobster size and used a broader range of fishery and survey data. It also accounted for many factors unique to lobster, including seasonal molting patterns and lobster biology.

Does the new model incorporate management measure effects? Yes, different management scenarios can be plugged into the model to account for changes in regulations, such as v-notching (the practice of fishermen making a v-shaped notch in the tails of egg-bearing female lobsters and not keeping any lobster with a notch) or changes in minimum size.

men harvest approximately 50% of the available (i.e., legal-sized) lobster in the ocean. Biological information indicates that only 30% of the available lobster should be removed in order to maintain a healthy fishable population over the long-term.

Stock Status

The new stock assessment recommends revisions to the reference points set in Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Stock status is determined by comparing threshold

continued on page 10



Robert H. Boyles Jr. Elected ASMFC Chair

At the Commission's 68th Annual Meeting, member states acknowledged the many accomplishments of outgoing Chair George D. Lapointe of Maine and elected Commissioner Robert H. Boyles, Jr. of South Carolina as the Commission's new Chair.

In assuming the chairmanship, Commissioner Boyles spoke enthusiastically about his new position, "I am honored to be elected and look forward to working with my colleagues from the 15 Atlantic coast states, federal marine fishery management agencies, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, and the District of Columbia to ensure the continued conservation and management of Atlantic coast marine fishery resources."

"George Lapointe has left me an impressive legacy to follow," stated Commissioner Boyles. "During his tenure as

Chair, he led the Commission in an extensive strategic planning effort, culminating in the development of the 2009-2013 Strategic Plan. This document recommits the 15 Atlantic coast states to their shared vision of stock rebuilding and sustainable resource management. It formalizes, for the first time, Commissioner values in pursuit of the Commission's vision and mission, and reaffirms the Commission's commitment to transparency and accountability in its decision-making processes. George effortlessly oversaw a critical period of transition in Commission leadership as veteran Commissioners with a combined 100 years of service retired and the next generation was prepared to actively engage in the Commission's programs and activities, and take up the charge of pursuing the states' collective mission of sustainable resource management. He fostered the professional growth and expertise of the ASMFC staff, and enhanced Commission services to state members. He oversaw the states' efforts to conserve and rebuild diadromous species through the completion of the long-awaited benchmark American shad stock assessment and the development and adoption of a new amendment for river herring. During my two-year term, I hope to build upon

these accomplishments, furthering the Commission's long-term vision for healthy, self-sustaining marine fishery resources by 2015, which in turn allows for healthy fisheries from these stocks."

Commissioner Boyles has long experience in the field of marine resource management and brings an intrinsic understanding of economics and policy implementation to the Commission. He has worked at the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources for over ten years, serving since 2003 as its Deputy Director for Marine Resources. He represents South Carolina on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and teaches graduate-level courses at the University of Charleston. Previous experience includes work with the Sea Grant program and various research positions. Commissioner Boyles holds a Master of Marine Policy from the University of Delaware and a Bachelor's in Mathematical Economics, and has authored several published papers. He resides in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina with his wife and two sons.

The Commission also elected Mr. Paul Diodati from Massachusetts as its Vice-Chair.

Atlantic Menhaden Addendum IV Extends Reduction Fishery Cap to 2013

The Commission's Atlantic Menhaden Management Board approved Addendum IV to Amendment 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Menhaden. Addendum IV extends the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery harvest cap, established through Addendum III, for an additional three years (2011 – 2013). Under the Addendum, the Board will annually review measures to determine if they are appropriate given the most recent information available about the stock and fishery. At any future meeting, the Board can initiate development of additional or alternative management measures.



The Board's action was requested by the Commonwealth of Virginia in order to accommodate its legislative process as well as ensure that the current management program is extended while menhaden research efforts continue. Virginia's legislature, which convenes in January each year, is responsible for regulating the menhaden reduction fishery in state waters.

continued on page 8

Weakfish Addendum IV Adopted in Response to Depleted Stock Status

The Commission's Weakfish Management Board approved measures to reduce exploitation by over 50 percent in both the recreational and commercial sectors. Addendum IV requires states to implement a one fish recreational creel limit, 100 pound commercial trip limit, 100 pound commercial bycatch limit during closed seasons, and 100 undersized fish per trip allowance for the finfish trawl fishery. All other management measures previously adopted to conserve the stock and reduce bycatch remain in effect.

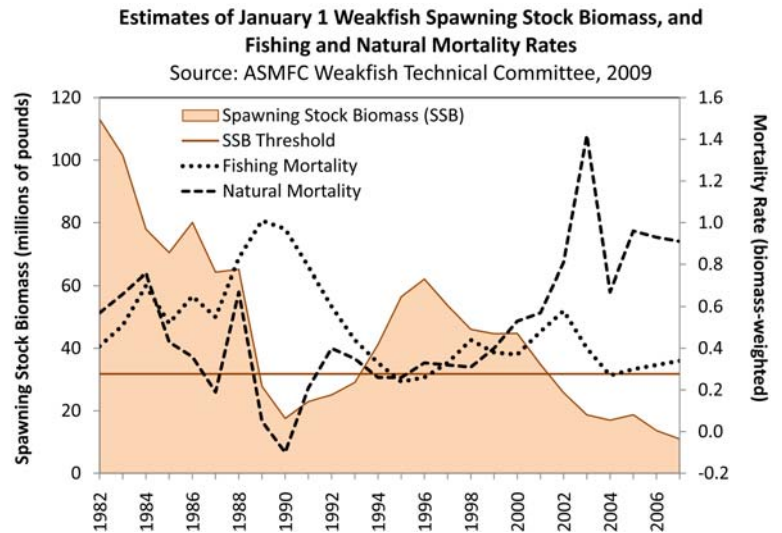
The Board's action comes in response to the stock status of weakfish. A recent peer-reviewed assessment found the weakfish stock to be depleted, with spawning stock biomass estimated to be three percent of an unfished stock, well below the 20 percent threshold and 30 percent target reference points also approved by the Board as part of Addendum IV. The decline in biomass reflects a sustained rise in natural mortality after 1995, rather than fishing mortality

which has been modest and stable over the same time period.

"The Board received a significant amount of public comment supporting a coastwide moratorium. In recognition of this, it chose to implement measures that would discourage directed fishing, limit bycatch mortality, and ensure that critical sampling programs remain on track," stated Board Chair Roy Miller.

While the decline appears to have resulted from a change in the natural mortality of weakfish in recent years, it is

further exacerbated by continued removals by commercial and recreational fisheries. However, given the high mortality levels, the stock is also unlikely to recover rapidly. The Addendum's measures are intended to reduce the level of harvest without creating a large amount of discards. Addendum IV is available via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News.



Board Approves Commercial Quota Transfers for Black Sea Bass and Scup Between States

The Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board approved Addendum XX to the Fishery Management Plan. Addendum XX allows for the transfer of commercial allocations for black sea bass (entire year) and scup summer period (May 1-October 31) managed under the Commission's plans. As a practical matter, states routinely under harvest or slightly overharvest their state-specific allocations due to delays in reporting, inconsistencies in the data collection processes, and unanticipated changes in catch rates. The FMP requires that each state deduct overages from the following year's quota when they occur. Addendum XX establishes a process to reconcile quotas to ad-

dress states' unintended minor overages through within-year transfers and end-of-year reconciliations.

The Addendum addresses three major issues: (1) state-to-state transfers, (2) quota reconciliation, and (3) quota distribution. State-to-state transfers may occur at any time in the fishing season up to 45 days after the last day of the fishing season. These transfers require a donor state (state giving quota) and a receiving state (state accepting additional quota). There is no limit on the amount of quota that can be transferred by this mechanism, and the terms and conditions of the transfer are to be identified solely by the parties involved in the transfer.

In a year where the coastwide quota or fishing period quota was not exceeded, any state-specific overage would be automatically forgiven in its entirety. In the event that the coastwide quota was exceeded, where multiple states seek reconciliation, the Commission staff would determine and notify Commission members of which states exceeded their state specific allocations. Commission staff would contact those states that under-harvested their allocations to confirm the accuracy and reliability of the data. A state with an underage would notify the Commission whether the underage could be transferred to the

continued on page 11

Atlantic Striped Bass Assessment Update Finds Resource Not Overfished and Overfishing Not Occurring

The 2009 Atlantic striped stock assessment update indicates that the resource remains in good condition with female spawning stock biomass (SSB) 148% of the SSB target and 185% of the SSB threshold. Estimated fishing mortality rates (F) in 2008 are equal to or less than 0.21 and below the target (0.30) and threshold (0.34) rates. The assessment provides stock status for the combination of the three primary stocks (Hudson River, Delaware River, and Chesapeake and tributaries). The striped bass stock complex is determined to be not overfished with overfishing not occurring.

Although spawning stock and total biomass have remained relatively stable over the last several years, stock abundance declined from 2004 to 2007 with a small increase in 2008. The decrease in abundance is reflected in a decline in coastwide landings in 2007 and 2008. The decline is more prevalent in areas largely dependent on contributions from the Chesapeake stocks (such as Maine) than areas that are dominated by the Hudson stock (such as New York). The spawning stock has remained relatively stable due to the growth and maturation of the 2003 year class and the accumulation of spawning biomass from year classes prior to 1996. The latest results of the statistical catch-at-age model also exhibit an increasing retrospective bias where F is overestimated and abundance and biomass underestimated. Retrospective bias may be the result of error in catch estimates, natural mortality,

unequal stock mixing, and changes in catchability or selectivity. Analysis of tag data also suggests an increasing natural mortality in Chesapeake Bay, likely the result of the mycobacteriosis.

Recruitment estimates have averaged 12.5 million fish since 1995 when the stock complex was declared restored. The 2006 and 2007 estimates were the lowest in recent years at 7.4 million and 5.8 million fish, respectively. The 2003 cohort remains the largest since 1982 at 22.8 million fish. Recruitment in 2008 of 13.3 million fish was slightly above the recent average.

Striped bass are one of the most sought after species by recreational anglers along the Atlantic coast. In 2008, recreational anglers landed over 2.2 million striped bass weighing 12,310 metric tons (mt). Recreational landings have ranged from a low of 336 mt in 1989 to a high of 13,814 mt in 2006. The coastwide landings in 2008 reflect a 17% decline from a high of 2.7 million fish in 2006. Changes in landings have varied by state, with MA, CT, and NY showing an increase in landings and the remaining states showing a 32% decrease on average. Recreational discard mortalities (assuming an 8% mortality of releases) in 2008 were 950,000 fish, a 64% decrease from a high of 2.1 million fish in 2006.

Landings from the commercial striped bass fishery have been consistently

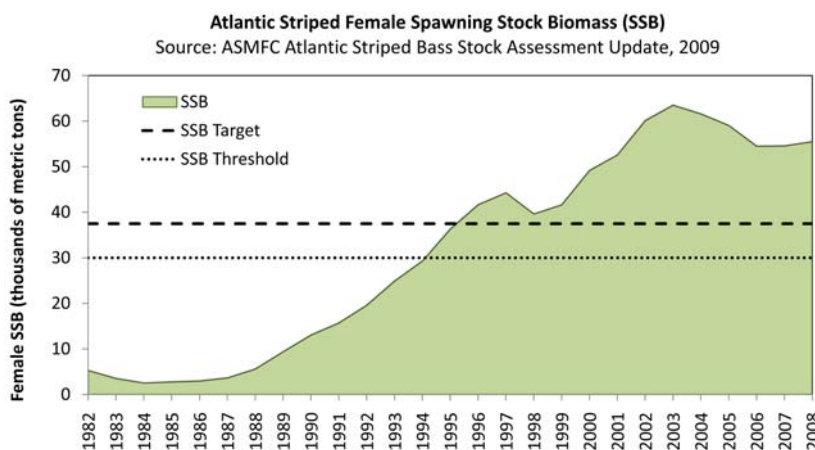
lower than the recreational catch. Commercial landings increased from 63 mt in 1987 to 2,679 mt in 1997 and have remained steady due to quota restrictions. Landings in 2008 were 3,281 mt. Gill nets are the dominant commercial gear used to target striped bass. Other commercial fishing gears include hook and line, pound nets, seines, and trawls.

Copies of the stock assessment update will be available on the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News.

Atlantic Menhaden Addendum IV (cont'd from page 8)

With Addendum IV in place this year, Virginia state administrators can work with the legislature in early 2010 to amend Virginia law to extend the harvest cap without the current cap expiring.

Addendum III established the current annual cap of 109,020 metric tons on reduction fishery harvests in Chesapeake Bay as a precautionary measure while research was conducted to address the question of menhaden abundance in the Bay. The cap was first instituted in 2006 to extend through 2010. With adoption of Addendum IV that cap will be extended through 2013 with the following provisions. Harvest for reduction purposes is prohibited in Chesapeake Bay when 100% of the cap is landed. Overharvest in any given year will be deducted from the next year's quota. Under-harvest in one year will be credited only to the following year's cap, not to exceed 122,740 metric tons. Since 2006, reduction landings of menhaden from Chesapeake Bay have not exceeded the cap of 109,020 metric tons. Addendum IV is available at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News.



Red Drum Benchmark Assessment Finds Resource Relatively Stable with Overfishing Not Occurring

The 2009 peer reviewed stock assessment for red drum indicates that abundance of young fish for both the northern (NJ – NC) and southern (SC – FL) stock complexes have remained relatively stable since 2000. The stock assessment concluded that sufficient numbers of young fish are surviving to move offshore and join the adult spawning population, indicating that overfishing is likely not occurring.

Data limitations resulting from red drum's life history characteristics and management regime present unique challenges to scientists as they try to assess the status of the stock. Relatively little is known about the adult (spawning) population of red drum (ages 4 and older) as these fish are primarily found in offshore waters where fishing for red drum is prohibited under federal law. As such, there is little fishery-dependent information on the larger, reproductive fish and limited fishery-independent data. Existing data are largely for the juvenile component of the resource (ages 1 – 3) found in inshore waters. Fishery-dependent data are constrained by the fisheries slot limit, which ranges anywhere from 15 to 27 inches (again limiting the amount of information about larger fish) and fishery-independent data are supplied by multiple state inshore surveys.

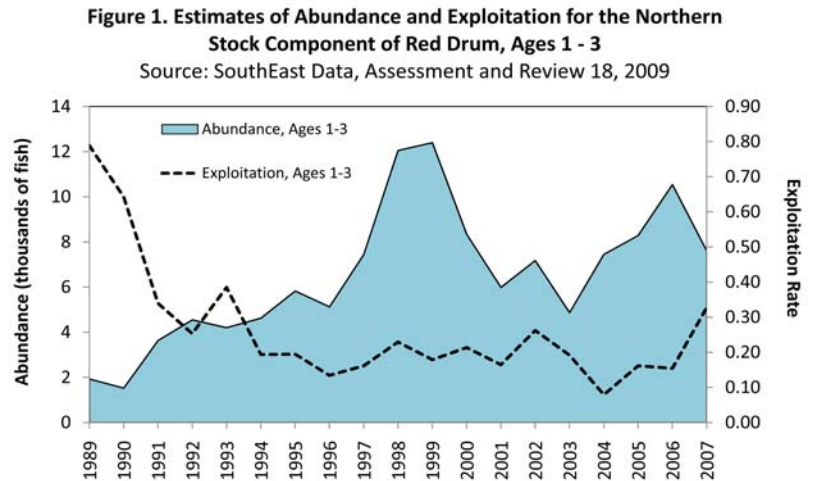
The end result of these limitations is a stock assessment that adequately describes abundance and exploitation rates for the preadult component of the population (ages 1 – 3), particularly for the northern region, but provides no reliable information on the adult component. Additionally, the stock assessment model was considered to be informative only about the relative, not absolute, trends in age 1 – 3 abundance and exploitation for the southern region. Therefore, only general conclusions about trends in stock status could be provided for the southern region.

In the northern region, abundance of age 1 – 3 red drum increased during 1990 – 2000 after which it widely fluctuated. The initial increase in abundance of these age groups can be explained by the reduction in exploitation rates in the early part of the time series with relative stability since then. Fishing pressure appears to be stable, and there is a high probability that the stock

is not subject to overfishing. It is likely that the fishing mortality rate is at or above its target (Figure 1).

In the southern region, the relative trend in abundance of age 1 – 3 red drum increased during 1989 – 1992, declined

continued on page 12



Omnibus Amendment PID Released for Public Comment: Southern States to Conduct Hearings in December

The Commission's South Atlantic State-Federal Fisheries Management Board has approved the Public Information Document (PID) for an Omnibus Amendment to the Interstate Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for Spanish Mackerel, Spot, and Spotted Seatrout for public review and comment. The PID and subsequent amendment are being developed to update the three species management plans to include compliance measures and other Commission standards since all three plans are voluntary in nature and lack standards that were developed in response to the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act (e.g., adaptive management, *de minimis* criteria). In the case of Spanish mackerel, the PID will also address modifying the Commission's management program so that it is consistent with federal management in the exclusive economic zone (because the plan is intended to track federal Spanish mackerel measures).

The states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia will be conducting public hearings in December on the PID (see page 3 for the details of the scheduled hearings). The PID is available on the Commission's website at www.asmf.org under Breaking News. Public comment will be accepted until 5:00 PM (EST) on **January 15, 2010** and should be forwarded to Nichola Meserve, FMP Coordinator, 1444 'Eye' Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 289-6051 (FAX) or at nmeserve@asmfc.org (Subject line: Omnibus Amendment).

Northern Shrimp 2010 Fishing Season Set at 180 Days

The Commission's Northern Shrimp Section approved a 180-day fishing season for the 2009-2010 northern shrimp fishery, the same length of last year's season. The season was based on favorable stock conditions, with the resource not overfished and not experiencing overfishing, and a recommendation of the Advisory Panel.

"Our efforts to reduce fishing mortality in the early 2000s continue to result in a high abundance of shrimp," stated Section Chair Pat White from Maine. "We hope the markets open up for this plentiful wild-caught species."

The 2005 year-class showed good strength in this summer's annual survey and will be available as a quality

product to the fishery this season. The 2006 year-class continues to be very weak and will likely be unavailable in significant numbers as five-year olds for the 2011 season. However, the 2007 and 2008 year-classes exhibited average strength when compared to past years of the survey.

"The Section is pleased that current stock abundance allows us to set another six-month fishing season," continued Mr. White. "The longer season gives dealers increased flexibility to identify new markets or expand existing ones."

The 2010 fishing season, which is the same for mobile and trap gear, will be open seven days a week from December 1, 2009, through May 29, 2010.

The Section also elected Douglas Grout of New Hampshire and George D. Lapointe of Maine as its new Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively. The northern shrimp fishery is jointly regulated by Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Northern Shrimp Section. The cooperative management program has been in place since 1972 and is currently managed under Amendment 1 to the Northern Shrimp Fishery Management Plan.

Copies of the 2009 shrimp assessment are available on the Commission's website at <http://www.asmfc.org/northernShrimp.htm> (under annual reports).

Species Profile: American Lobster (continued from page 5)

values to the average abundance and exploitation rate during recent years (2005-2007). Thus, "overfishing" would occur if the average recent exploitation rate were higher than the threshold. A stock would be "depleted" if average recent abundance fell below the threshold. Given these recommended revised reference points, the GOM and GBK stocks are not depleted and overfishing is not occurring, while the SNE is depleted but not experiencing overfishing.

Atlantic Coastal Management

Several historical parallels can be drawn between attempts to manage lobster in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and modern management efforts. Beginning in the 1880s, size-structure and catcher-trap started declining all along the Atlantic coast. These declines were attributed to increased fishing effort throughout the fishery. Many of the management measures that were discussed or implemented to deal with the diminished productivity of the lobster fishery (minimum sizes, v-notching, closed season, maximum size, slot lim-

its, trap limits, protection of egg bearing lobster) are the same management tools under consideration today. In many cases, the regulations a century ago were more restrictive than their modern equivalents. The debate over the relative importance of fishing versus other factors in the decline of the lobster fishery such as predation and habitat degradation also have remained largely unchanged since the issue was first raised in the early 20th century.

Today, American lobster is managed under Amendment 3 and its 15 addenda. Its major provisions include: minimum and maximum carapace length; maximum trap limits; prohibition on the possession of buried lobsters (lobster with eggs); prohibition on possession of lobster meat and lobster parts; trap configuration requirements; prohibition on spearing lobsters; prohibition on possession of female v-notched lobsters; and limits on landings with non-trap gear. Amendment 3 establishes seven lobster management areas: Inshore GOM (Area 1), Inshore

SNE (Area 2), Offshore Waters (Area 3), Inshore Northern Mid-Atlantic (Area 4), Inshore Southern Mid-Atlantic (Area 5), New York and Connecticut State Waters (Area 6), and Outer Cape Cod. Lobster Conservation Management Teams (LCMTs), composed of industry representatives, were formed for each management area. The LCMTs are charged with advising the Lobster Board and recommending changes to the management plan within their areas.

Amendment 3 also provides the flexibility to respond to current conditions of the resource and fishery by making changes to the management program through addenda. Since 1999, the American Lobster Board has approved 15 addenda to further the conservation and management goals of Amendment 3.

In November, the Management Board approved two new addenda -- one as final action (Addendum XV) and one in draft form to go out for public com-

continued on page 12

Emily Greene Awarded ASMFC Employee of the Quarter

In her 19 months with the Commission as Coordinator for the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP), Emily Greene has made great strides in establishing partnerships to conserve important fish habitat along the Atlantic coast. Her efforts have significantly contributed towards achieving the Commission's Vision of "healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015." In recognition of her accomplishments, Emily was named Employee of the Quarter for the fourth quarter of 2009. The award is intended to recognize contributions and qualities in the areas of teamwork, initiative, responsibility, quality of work, positive attitude, and results.



Emily has done an exceptional job in coordinating and leading the ACFHP through its start-up, implementation, and designation as a nationally recognized Fish Habitat Partnership. The Partnership, established under the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, is a coastwide collaborative effort involving state and federal agencies, regional and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, academia, and private citizens to protect and restore fish habitat along the Atlantic seaboard. Emily's diverse skills and strong work ethic have been a considerable asset to the ACFHP Steering Committee and its supporting committees as they worked to develop a species-habitat matrix, an assessment of existing habitat information, and the ACFHP's website and long-term Strategic Plan.

Emily energizes the Partnership with her enthusiasm and dedication, embracing the challenge of working with diverse agencies and organizations to leverage their individual and collective contributions to help conserve critical fish habitat along the Atlantic coast. Emily holds a Master of Environmental Management from the Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences at Duke University and a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Environmental Science from the College of William and Mary. As an Employee of the Quarter, she received a \$500 cash award, a small gift, and a letter of appreciation to be placed in her personnel record. In addition, her name is on the Employee of Quarter Plaque displayed in the Commission's lobby. Congratulations, Emily!

Board Approves Commercial Quota Transfers for Black Sea Bass and Scup Between States

"common pool" to be redistributed to states with overages.

Further, the Addendum establishes a negotiated distribution process whereby states with overages will develop a sharing agreement or formula to distribute the common pooled underage based on the nature of the overages in that given year. The unanimous agreement of the states with overages would be required to distribute underages in this manner. If unanimous agreement cannot be reached, then the common pool underage would be apportioned to each state based on the state's percent share of the quota as established by the FMP.

The Commission's Interstate Fisheries Management Program (ISFMP) Policy Board is currently addressing the broader concepts behind quota ownership, disposition of unharvested quota, and quota transfers, including a state's right to choose how to use quota allocated to them. The provisions of section 4.2 (automatic reconciliation) and 4.3 (distribution process) will expire at the end of the 2011 fishing year unless the Board takes action to modify or extend the provisions of the Addendum. The Addendum is not intended to be precedent setting for any decisions that may be made by the ISFMP Policy Board.

Addendum XX is available on the Commission's website at www.asmf.org under Breaking News.



Return Service Requested

Species Profile: American Lobster (continued from page 11)

ment (Draft Addendum XVI). Addendum XV modifies the LCMA 1 - GOM permit process in federal waters in response to increasing lobster fishing effort in that area since 2000 (highest on record since 1981). The Addendum maintains the historic level of trap fishing effort (2004 – 2008) and curtails a potential influx of new federal lobster vessels in LCMA 1. It also limits entry of vessels which have not fished with traps in LCMA 1 in the past from fishing in Area 1 with traps in the future. The actions under Addendum XV will be forwarded to the National Marine Fisheries Service as recommendations for action in the federal waters portion of LCMA 1.

Draft Addendum XVI considers the establishment of new reference points for each of the three lobster stocks. Specific options include recommendations from the Technical Committee and the Peer Review Panel from the 2009 stock assessment. The Draft Addendum also proposes changes in the procedures by which stock status is determined and new reference points can be adopted. The draft will be released in late November for public comment; copies can be obtained via the Commission's website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News.

Red Drum Assessment (continued from page 9)

during 1992 – 1998 and has fluctuated thereafter. As with the northern stock, the initial increase in abundance of these age groups can be explained by the reduction in exploitation rates in the early part of the time series. There appears to have been a slight increase in exploitation rates since 1990 (Figure 2). Given these findings, the Commission's South Atlantic Board did not initiate any changes to the management program at this time. A more detailed description of the stock assessment results will be available by mid-December and can be obtained via the Commission website at www.asmfc.org under Breaking News.

Figure 2. Trends in Abundance and Exploitation for the Southern Stock Component of Red Drum, Ages 1 - 3
Source: SouthEast Data, Assessment and Review 18, 2009

